

# Effects of Employing a Technician into and Promoting the Medicines Information Service

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## Introduction

Medicines Information at St Helens and Knowsley NHS Trust (STHK) processed 494 enquiries from March 2016 to May 2017. This averaged at 33 enquiries per calendar month. STHK holds 887 beds. It was apparent that as a service we can provide further support and promotion of the service was required. Responses to the UKMi User Survey were paper based and records unknown. In June 2017 a new pharmacist was employed and promotion of the Medicines Information Service was undertaken mid to late 2017. Prior to June 2017 re-structure of the STHK Pharmacy department led to an opening for a new Medicines Information Pharmacist. STHK had a Medicines Information Technician but they left as the new pharmacist began in June 2017. The Medicines Information Service ran a patient helpline number but did not have a generic e-mail address for contact.

## Aim

To increase awareness of Medicines Information at STHK, increase enquiry numbers per annum and employ a Medicines Information Technician.

## Method - several methods of promotion were conducted:

1. The new pharmacist introduced self to Pharmacy department, provided teaching to colleagues and wider Trust staff and updated resources.
2. A generic e-mail for the service was set up.
3. The service was promoted Trust wide at the STHK 'Team Brief' in late 2017.
4. A Medicines Information Technician (0.5 WTE) was employed in March 2018 to increase service capacity and improve skill mix.
5. Training was developed and reinstated for pre-registration pharmacists, rotational pharmacists, and student technicians.
6. Technician was developed, re-accredited and encouraged to take responsibility of aspects of the service.

### Enquiry Numbers

Since initial promotion in 2017, 581 enquiries were processed from June 2017 to March 2018 (58 per month). After employment of a technician in 2018, the service processed 757 enquiries in the financial year of 2018/2019 (63 per month).

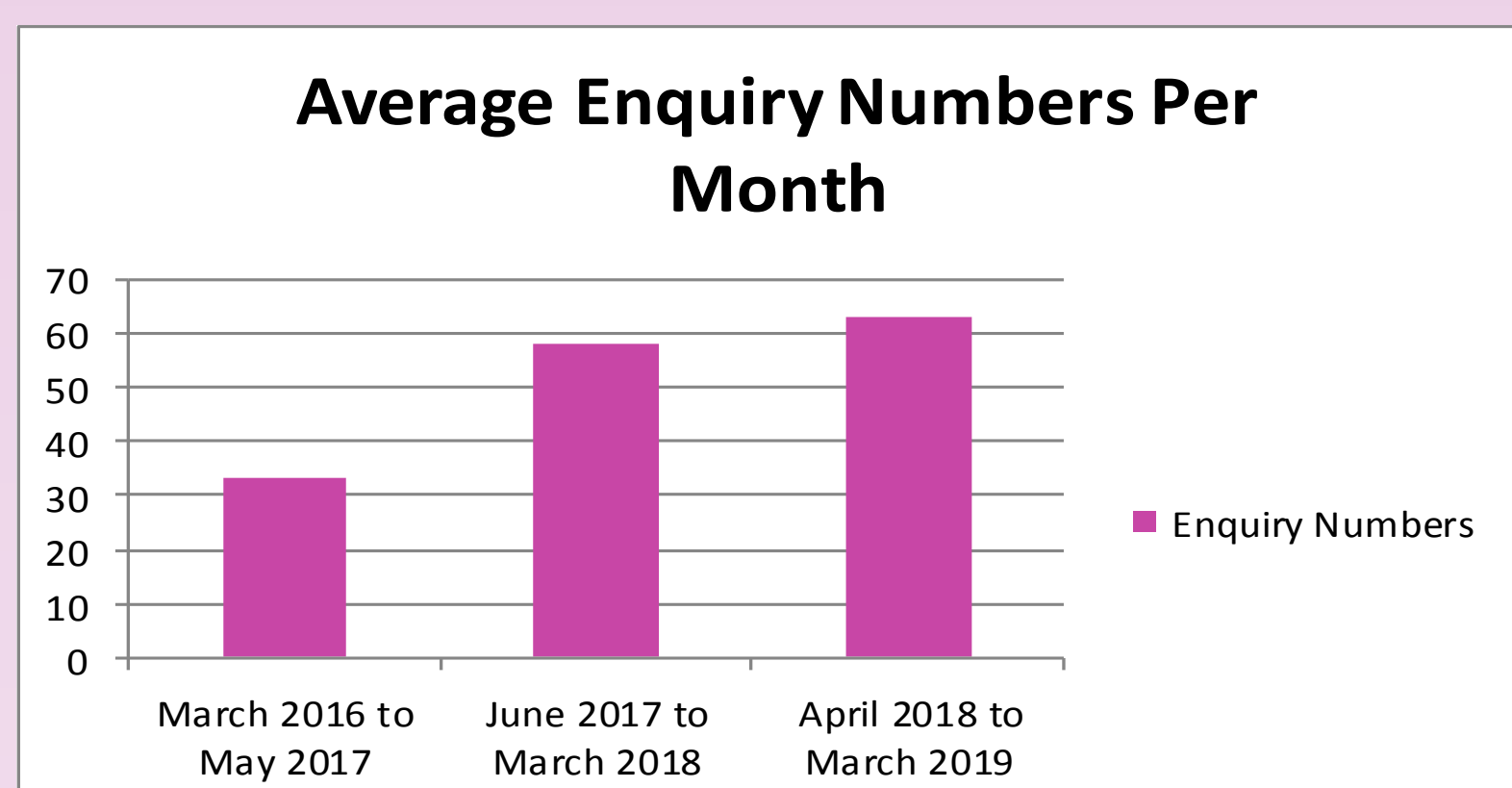


Figure 1. A graph to show average enquiry numbers between three time periods: March 16-17 (pre promotion), June 17 to March 18 (new pharmacist & promotion) and from March 18 to April 18 (new technician appointed).

### User Survey

From June 2017-March 2018 electronic surveys were sent. Responses were poor. The technician took charge of the user survey, changing to paper surveys in April 2018. Responses have increased to 46.7% from 16.7% (pharmacist alone) with an average score of 5.9/6.

### Phone Cover

The number of hours that the telephone helpline covered had increased from 27 hours per week (pharmacist only) to approximately 32 hours per week on average (team).

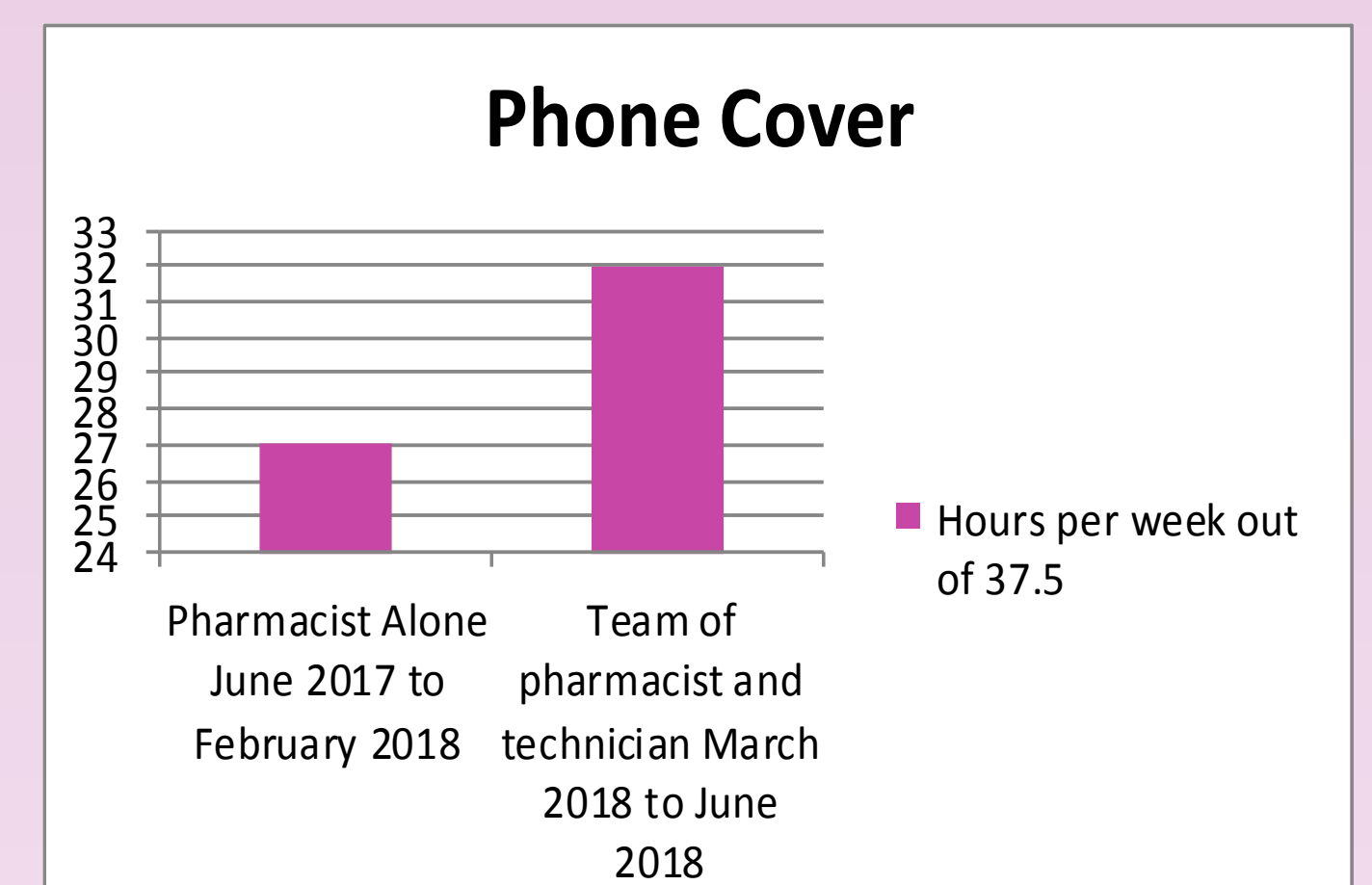


Figure 2. A graph to show the hours per week of phone cover when pharmacist worked alone compared to the addition of the technician.

## Results

### Training

Since June 2017 the following training has been created:

- A three day training regime and pack for student technicians.
- An induction week and training pack for pre-registration pharmacists.
- Induction presentation for cross sector students, pharmacists and Pharmacy staff on starting the Trust.
- Short burst sessions for the pharmacists to aid enquiries at ward/directorate levels.
- ADR presentations for Pharmacy and Nurses to encourage ADR reporting.
- Establishment of the rotational pharmacist rotation and training pack is in progress.

### New E-mail Address

A new e-mail address was created, which is advertised on patient bags in Pharmacy and a leaflet with service details is inserted into outpatient and discharge prescription bags. Our e-mail is frequently used by departments to log enquiries with us. Dermatology and rheumatology are two of our biggest enquiry origins, they submit their queries mainly via e-mail.

**medicines.information@sthk.nhs.uk**

### Technician Progress & Support

Since March 2018 the Medicines Information technician:

- Became re-accredited in their Mi qualification.
- Helped the pharmacist to create training packs for student technicians
- Updated SOPs
- Helped to deliver and create training across the department.
- Increased coverage of patient helpline and enquiry numbers.
- Attended meetings and networked.

## Discussion

Since June 2017 and new staff starting Pharmacy is aware of and utilises Medicines Information to a greater degree. Pharmacy colleagues have been empowered by Medicines Information to use new and niche resources to support their ward and directorate work. This teaching is on-going and recurring. Combination of a pharmacist and technician has increased capacity, team work, training and reliability of the service. Unfortunately STHK lost the Medicines Information Technician in June 2019. Since then, phone cover and enquiry numbers have decreased. This poster highlights the positive outcomes of introducing a technician into Medicines Information and the need for re-employment of a Medicines Information Technician into the team. Promotion of the service under new staff has been beneficial to the Trust as well as Pharmacy and it is clear that continual promotion is required to increase awareness of the Medicines Information Team at STHK.